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FOR NEA/ARPI AND G/TIP

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SUBJECT: FREEDOM AGENDA: EMBASSY INITIATES KUWAIT EXPATRIATE LABOR ROUNDTABLE

¶1. Post organized and hosted on January 24th a meeting of labor officials from source countries for expatriate labor in Kuwait to engage on how to better work together to improve the status of Kuwait's large expatriate labor force.

Representatives from the embassies of Bangladesh, Indonesia, Pakistan, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka attended.

Representatives from the embassy of India and the International Organization for Migration were unavailable. The participants exchanged information about the challenges their constituents face: nonpayment of wages, sexual harassment, poor working conditions, mistreatment by the police, and exploitation due to lack of the local language and labor laws. At the urging of Emboffs, participants also exchanged ideas about practical ways of solving or mitigating the difficulties faced by their constituents, such as increasing the workers' awareness of the services their embassies can provide, the dangers of signing documents they do not understand, what to do if arrested by the police, and where to turn in case of physical or sexual harassment.

¶2. All parties agreed to participate in regular monthly meetings in order to share information with one another and to increase the effectiveness of their activities by uniting their efforts. They expressed their gratitude to the United States for its attention to labor and human rights issues, and for taking the initiative to create this forum.

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LeBaron